

REMARKS

Claims 1-67 are pending. Claims 1, 35 and 36 are independent.

Claims 1-5, 7-15, 17-29, 35-50, 52-64, 66 and 67 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(c) over Mora et al. (U.S. patent No. 6,161,113). Claims 6, 16, 30-34, 51 and 65 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Mora in view of Webber Jr., (U.S. patent No. 6,167,378). In light of the following remarks, reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Each of independent claims 1, 35 and 36 require “automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities of the approval hierarchy upon approval of at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy.” That is, among other things, each of the independent claims requires that the notice is automatically forwarded to “a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy.”

On the other hand, there is no teaching whatsoever in Mora of any approval hierarchy. The Office Action once again pointed to Mora at col. 10, lines 1-2, col. 10, lines 52-53, col. 12, lines 23-24 and col. 13, lines 9-10 as allegedly disclosing four levels of approval, which the Office Action deems as somehow meeting the recited limitation of an “approval hierarchy.” Applicants respectfully disagree.

These portions of Mora do not disclose an *approval hierarchy* at all. Rather, each relates to the *same level* of approval, namely “senior executive review,” of four different *phases* of a project. That is, at col. 10, lines 1-2, senior executive review is recorded as to the planning phase of a project. At col. 10, lines 52-53, senior executive review is recorded as to the preliminary design phase of a project. At col. 12, lines 23-24 senior executive review is recorded as to the design, build and test phases of a project and at col. 13, lines 9-10, senior executive review is recorded as to the install and support phases of a project.

As can be seen by the foregoing review of the cited portions of Mora et al., there is no hierarchy of *approval* taught in these portions at all. In fact, the approval level never

changes. The only thing that changes is the *phase of the project*. For at least this reason, Mora et al. cannot be said to anticipate the features of the independent claims.

Moreover, each of the independent claims requires that the notice is automatically forwarded "upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval hierarchy." Since, as was discussed above, Mora et al. contains no teaching as to an approval hierarchy, it follows that it cannot teach a "previous entity in the approval hierarchy." For at least this additional reason, Mora et al. cannot be said to anticipate the features of the independent claims of the present invention.

As Mora et al. does not teach or even suggest the limitations recited in each of the independent claims as discussed above, withdrawal of the rejection of all of the claims on the basis of Mora et al. is therefore respectfully requested.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

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Respectfully submitted,

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